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TO REDS, HE SEEMED PEERLESS SPY UNTIL

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ROME.

Terse teletype messages clacked out commandingly in Soviet diplomatic missions around the world the last fortnight. They were recall orders—"consultation" was the official explanation.

Taciturn young men, neatly dressed and pressed, flew off in pairs to Moscow. Another mammoth self-examination of Soviet state security had been launched, the second in less than a year.

It all started with the disappearance and resurfacing in, of all places, Washington, of dark-complexioned, handsome, multilingual Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko. His development as a trouble-shooting officer for the KGB—the Russian's security branch that combines counter-espionage, spy recruitment, sabotage and our own Federal Bureau of Investigation functions—had been classic.

Classic that is, in the Soviet sense of molding a top agent from schoolboy callowness. He had been, as quite a few others, spotted by KGB talent scouts at school. There was their flair for languages, ease in assimilating in strange conditions and an impeccable comradely background. Nosenko's father had been a ranking party member.

There was nothing in his demeanor and in his operational work to suggest that Nosenko thought of defecting. This suspicion must persist—in ours or their security apparatus. Moreover, his wife is young and attractive. They have two small children on whom the state lavished more in worldly goods than accrues to even a vast section of the professional classes.

Only 36 and a KGB man for 14 years, Nosenko would seem to his superiors the perfectly molded, mid-twentieth century trusted Soviet agent. He had been on trips to London where he reported on activities of his colleagues and in Geneva on international conference panels.

EDUCATED FOE

His reports, as far as any one can learn now, met with favor at home. Nosenko could act the sophisticate when policy so demanded. Or, he could be the coldest, most calculating agent when directives called for ruthlessness.

In a way, he was a James Bond enemy, with an education.

The KGB and other Soviet civilian and military security agencies were grateful to young men like Nosenko, especially after last year's Penkovsky case. That was perhaps the most publicly and sensationally successful project United States intelligence ever ran. It involved Col. Oleg Penkovsky, who had direct access to Soviet officials of the first military rank.

Penkovsky was much older than Nosenko, and this led to obtuse Soviet reasoning that the colonel was therefore prone to corruption. Yet the blueprints of Russian rocketry, military thinking and political strategy were conveyed through Penkovsky to the West for years, as through a smooth pipeline.

In a quick court martial, Penkovsky was condemned and executed. Top Red Army officers were forcibly retired. A great deal of even guilt by association rubbed off on

ranking Soviet personalities. Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, Premier Khrushchev's Defense Minister, personally led an inquiry. His order came right from a ruffled Khrushchev, whom East European Communists quoted as saying:

"You are not a Soviet marshal. You are an idiot."

Mr. Khrushchev's opinion of marshals, his and any one else's, is low. At the time the Poles almost went to the barricades in the hectic fall of 1956, he turned on Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky, whom Stalin installed as Polish Minister of Defense.

"You are not a marshal," roared Mr. Khrushchev before Polish eyewitnesses. "You are a — (a gutter epithet)."

A RAGING MARK

Marshal Malinovsky, after the Penkovsky episode that shook up the Red Army and riddled all security services, reported all loopholes closed. So did the security chiefs. In person, from accounts that have been checked, they reassured Mr. Khrushchev.

Suddenly, the Nosenko affair. The spate of fury that struck a highly experienced, unemotional Soviet negotiator into near-hysteria in Geneva could only have washed angrily from the Kremlin to the conference table.

When the curt announcement came from Washington that Nosenko was already there, asking for asylum, Mr. Khrushchev apparently blew his top. His reaction has been reported by comrades in the bloc. Soviet security chiefs were called on the carpet and heard names Mr. Khrushchev uses at his earthiest.

Out went the instructions to Semyon K. Tsarapkin to make all possible charges and raise inordinate suspicions. The lantern-jawed Tsarapkin is chief Soviet delegate to the 17-nation Geneva disarmament conference. For years he worked on the nuclear test-ban treaty, before that at East-West negotiations all over the world.

His misfortune was to have so polished and trusted a KGB man as Nosenko as a watchdog—listed as an "expert"—on his own delegation.

There were three other young men flanking Nosenko listed also as experts. On what? The assumption is they were in the same business as their defected comrade.

Even if he was only a security counsel—and Nosenko was definitely more than that—his disappearance turned the whole Soviet negotiations posture upside-down. Codes had to be switched overnight, and papers had to be abandoned and the mental-psychological behavior pattern towards detail had to be recast.

Back home, Mr. Khrushchev turned from the farm for a couple of days to issue orders directly to Mr. Tsarapkin. It accounts for Mr. Tsarapkin's psychotic press conference, in Geneva, demanding Nosenko's return, and his bitter charges against the Swiss.

FLAWLESS SYSTEM

As an experienced, wily hand, especially in Switzerland, Mr. Tsarapkin knows on his own not to blame the Swiss for such a defection. They permitted, he cried, espionage—something the Swiss know full well that East and West run all the time.

What they resented most was Mr. Tsarapkin's accusation that Swiss authorities looked the other way, since the

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